Chivalry and the Medieval Past, ed. by K. Stevenson and B. Gribling (Boydell Press, 2016)

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The volume under review is the seventh monograph in the Medievalism series published by Boydell Press. It contains eight chapters and an introduction by the editors covering a wide geographical range from Scotland, Sweden, and England to Italy and Germany.

The back cover boasts that, with contributions spanning "diverse geographic regions and periods," the book "redraws current chronological boundaries by considering medievalism from the late Middle Ages to the present." Although the geographical scope of the volume is impressive and lends itself well to exploring how the medieval past was reused--and manipulated--the papers are less chronologically ambitious than the back cover leads us to believe. The paper with the earliest chronological frame explores the early eighteenth century. The majority of the papers focus on the later eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which in itself is not a problem if advertised as such. The introduction, however, does an excellent job of justifying the importance of the volume as well as discussing key themes, questions, and arguments that the articles individually and collectively pose. We are told that the premise of the book "is that chivalry was always looking back to the past, even in the Middle Ages, when a mythical past was created to explain chivalry to knights at court and beyond" (2). Indeed, each chapter sets out to establish how chivalry was reinterpreted by individuals and societies in many different ways and for many different reasons.

Given the difficulty of exploring chivalry--the introduction even states "chivalry is one of the most elusive ethical and cultural codes to define" (2)--the essays in the collection do a fine job of tackling such an ambiguous concept. At first glance, the essays appear to simply be in chronological order, and to be honest, at first I felt this would detract from the reader pulling out connections and thematic strands. However, as the reader traverses the Scottish Enlightenment, the Georgian and then Victorian periods, the twentieth-century World Wars, and finally, the present, one cannot help but be amazed at the obvious and subtle connections between the essays. The crossover and dialogue between essays make it surprising and disappointing that there is no explicit cross-referencing in the volume.

The first two essays are broadly concerned with the use of chivalry and the medieval past in published historical writing. David Allan starts the essays off with his "An Institution Quite Misunderstood: Chivalry and Sentimentalism in the Late Scottish Enlightenment." Allan uses the largely ignored histories written by Gilbert Stuart, arguing that Stuart produced a revisionist view of feudal society and chivalry almost entirely fuelled on the personal animosity towards William Robertson, a highly accomplished historian and principal of the University of Edinburgh. Stuart's reassessment, though fraught with bitterness, revealed much about eighteenth-century Scotland and the wider societal beliefs in land ownership, power, and the political and social order. The second essay by Antti Matikkala explores the manipulation and sometimes outright fabrication of the medieval past by eighteenth-century writers in order to give a seemingly illustrious history to the Swedish orders of knighthood. As Matikkala states, the medieval history of the "Swedish orders of knighthood is thus a combination of misunderstandings, religious propaganda, gradual accumulation of false information, deliberate confusion in concepts, blind belief in the printed word and wilful misinterpretation" (60).

The next two essays explore medievalism through architecture and offer a very interesting insight into how chivalry was conceptualised through visual media. Peter Lindfield explores the revival of Gothic styles of architecture and interior design during the Georgian period. Lindfield argues that Georgian Britain made links between "Gothic Revival design, heraldry, and the idea of chivalry" (98). The essay demonstrates that despite the rise of Classicism in the same period, Gothic Revival flourished as a mode for "the newly wealthy merchants and traders" (98) to assert their ancestry and fashionable tastes. Rosemary Mitchell in her essay "Knights on the Town? Commercial and Civic Chivalry in Victorian Manchester" shows us that architecture can boast of more than just a knightly chivalric code, but a civic one as well. Mitchell uses two case studies, (a) the autobiography of the Manchester engineer and inventor of the steam hammer, James Nasmyth, and (b) the Manchester Albert Memorial and its architectural context, to discuss how the urban built environment attempted to incorporate chivalric concepts "demonstrating both how easy and how difficult it could be for Victorian urban elites to appropriate and manipulate medieval chivalry in their attempts to legitimise, romanticise and historicise their public and private lives, activities and environments" (100).

Barbara Gribling's essay "The Dark Side of Chivalry: Victory, Violence and the Victorians" feels like an outlier in that she explores the negative interpretation of medieval chivalry. However, the importance of the essay is undeniable. It is too often the case that we assume people used the medieval past to their benefit, but Gribling shows, through the analysis of children's books, that the negative reaction to the values of chivalry was a result of the Romantic and Tory visions that had been disseminated.

These criticisms, it is argued, were an expression of wider discussions about the nature of democracy and the progress of the people.

Expressions of nationalism inform Steven Hughes' essay on the use of chivalric codes of conduct in nineteenth-century Italy. Hughes presents an interesting argument that Italian nationalism in the nineteenth century mirrored the cultural and social values of the medieval past more so than the Renaissance. Pulling examples from published treatises on duelling, Hughes argues that authors were attempting to create a "spiritual aristocracy" that should take example from the medieval knight whose attributes were seen as "courage, loyalty and gallantry" (168). Following nicely is Stefan Goebel's essay "The German Crusade: The Battles of Tannenberg, 1410 and 1914," which explores ideas of memory and commemoration in Germany in the twentieth century. Goebel uses the memory of the 1914 Battle of Tannenberg to demonstrate that memory was merged and manipulated to influence the past, present and future. Goebel states that the "dialectic of imagining historical continuity and lamenting human catastrophe was at the core of medievalist diction in war remembrance" (186).

The final essay in the collection by Paul Pickering explores re-enacting from the Eglinton Tournament in 1839 to the present day. Pickering uses Walter Scott's novel *Ivanhoe* as a starting point as it was this novel that inspired the Eglinton tournament, which Pickering labels as the "the first secular, civilian and unofficial re-enactment" (189). This leads nicely into the main discussion of contemporary re-enactment suggesting that it needs to be viewed through a variety of lens, including entertainment, commercialism, realism and affect. The essay offers not only a positive reaction to re-enactment and living history, but also some negative outcomes, such as the commercialisation of it at history festivals. Pickering ends his essay, and the volume, by saying "historians bent on ignoring modern medievalism seem destined to fall behind those who are doing history for themselves" (214). And that seems like an excellent way to end such a well put together piece of writing.

As a whole, the eight essays together offer the reader a valuable journey of interpretation, manipulation, and fabrication of the medieval past from the eighteenth century to the present day. The collection is beautifully put together and most essays offer images--some in colour--to enhance their arguments. However, it must be stated that the gender imbalance (two essays written by women; six by men) is rather disappointing. Putting the flaws to one side, the volume does offer a nuanced exploration of chivalry and medievalism across Europe.